Q4 2013 Supplemental Answers
Nebraska Broadband Planning
Quarterly Report – Oct 2013 thru Dec 2013

1. **If the project received funding for broadband planning, please describe progress made against all goals, objectives, and milestones detailed in the approved project plan. Be sure to include a description of each major activity/milestone that you plan to complete and your current status.** (Answer below.)

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. UNL is the fiscal agent for the planning part of the grant.

A number of activities were identified in the initial grant to identify barriers to the adoption of broadband and IT services, creating and facilitating local technology planning teams, and collaborating with broadband service providers to encourage broadband deployment and use. In the supplemental grant, activities were focused around three projects: capacity building, technical assistance and local planning. Following the NITA guidance and recent Webinar recommendation, the quarterly report will focus on the three project areas. For each section area, there is an overall summary of the project and then a quarterly update of the particular area.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: A Household Survey – initial and follow-up.

Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future through a survey conducted by UNL. The survey, mailed in February 2010, to 6,600 Nebraskans achieved a 47% response rate. The report, available at broadband.nebraska.gov, highlights regional, education, income, age, gender, racial and ethnic group comparisons.

A follow-up survey of households will be conducted in 2014 (Year 5 of grant) to document changes in Internet and broadband use since the initial survey. Regions that were originally identified as either unserved or underserved in the initial survey will be over-sampled in this follow-up survey.

> *4th Quarter 2013 Status Update.* The household survey was finalized during Q4 2013. The survey will be launched during January 2014. The follow-up survey to 9,000 Nebraskans will include over-sampling in under-served areas (i.e., Northwest, North Central, and Central Nebraska as well as certain areas of Omaha).

Business Survey

Businesses will be surveyed through the Department of Economic Development's Business Retention and Expansion program to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. To develop the statewide plan, over 1000 businesses will be included in the database as communities and regions have the capability to gather information from all types of businesses including retail, health care and services. The BR&E survey asks over 10 specific questions related to technology and broadband utilization. Additional questions will be developed that relate specifically to future opportunities. The data will be pulled together and themes will be developed.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update. DED continues to encourage communities to share broadband data in the BR&E program. During Q3 contracted with the Strategic Network Group (SNG) to identify benchmarks statewide around broadband. Survey launched September 3. Explained further under technical assistance and focused surveys.

Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs. In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. Results will be shared with project partners, regional teams and be available on the broadband portal.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update. Resources continue to be gathered and updated on the broadband website - http://broadband.nebraska.gov site. This page will move into a site that will be maintained after the grant. The focus will be to provide resources available to assist businesses in making decisions on whether or not to adopt technologies that utilize broadband as well as educational/training materials.

Focused Surveys. Focused surveys in regions where there are large numbers of non-adopters will help to better understand how to increase broadband adoption. The surveys will be conducted in specific counties, regions and in some parts of metropolitan areas where usage appears to be lower and will provide these areas with data specific to them that can be used to develop a plan that addresses their future needs. The surveys will also create local benchmark data that will help determine if broadband adoption increases in these areas over time.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update. The focused survey effort will primarily be around business and we are working with the Strategic Network Group (SNG) to conduct the business survey, establish benchmarks and to provide tools to share with businesses. The Lt. Governor launched the business survey on September 3, 2013. Over 1,100 businesses participated in the assessment. Preliminary results announced at the Nebraska broadband conference indicated that Nebraska businesses are utilizing technology applications such as teleworking and selling goods/services more than other states that have been surveyed. In Q1 2014 more in-depth analysis will begin.

Government and Economic Developer Survey. To gather information on access, adoption, usage, and technical assistance needs of all county and community governments, chambers of commerce, and for economic developers, a survey (web-based where feasible) of all entities will be conducted. This information will support the development of regional and community technology plans and will be used to develop targeted technical assistance for local governments and economic developers. Surveys were conducted with the Nebraska Economic Development Association (NEDA), Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO), and the League of Nebraska Municipalities (League) during Q2 2012. During Q4 the full reports were written and are available at broadband.nebraska.gov.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update. The NEDA report influenced the decision to conduct a more in-depth business survey and to build capacity amongst economic developers to better understand the technology needs of businesses in their communities. The League and NACO survey results were shared with the broadband planning efforts to identify broadband goals.

Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative – To meet the objectives of grant, the broadband planning oversight team meets on a bi-monthly basis and quarterly with PSC commissioners.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update: - To create awareness, 10 press releases were released during 2013. Best practice videos, webinars, regional plans, statewide conference, business survey and an app to measure state mobile broadband networks were all featured in news releases during 2013. To support the press releases social media including a continuous effort using statewide listservs.   Results from the business survey and household survey are a few of the items that will be highlighted in Q1 2014. During Q1 2014, the broadband initiative will be highlighted at several annual conferences to engage in the statewide planning process, provide results of the broadband survey and technical assistance.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Three cross-training efforts were identified in the Supplemental Application to address broadband adoption and utilization. These efforts outlined below are the Statewide Conference, Regional Workshops and Webinars.

Statewide Conference. The statewide conference will be focused on broadband adoption and utilization will bring together many industries including those working in economic development, telecommunications industry, education, state government, and local government personnel.

> *4th Quarter 2013 Status Update*:   Status. The 2013 Broadband Connecting Nebraska Conference was held Oct. 16-17 at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney, Nebraska. Nearly 300 people attended the event, including more than 80 students who participated in a specially-designed youth track for career and technical exploration. Keynote addresses were provided by Steve Kiene, Managing Principal of Nebraska Global; futurist Jack Uldrich; University of Nebraska-Kearney Chancellor Doug Kristensen; Kevin Capp from Mobil Pulse; Chuck Hibberd, Dean & Director of University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension; and Michael Curri from Strategic Networks Group.

> The conference included several breakout sessions highlighting success stories and practical advice on broadband adoption from a wide range of Nebraskans. The youth track included sessions led by Extension Educators on IT Career Exploration, Geospatial Data Management and GIS Applications in Agriculture. The conference concluded with roundtable sessions focused on regional broadband plans.

> The 2014 conference will once again be held at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney on October 1 & 2. Planning for the agenda is underway, and attendance is expected to grow both in numbers and geographic reach. Details on the conference are available at the Nebraska Broadband Initiative project portal at http://broadband.nebraska.gov

Regional Workshops. Regional workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization.

- *4th Quarter 2013 Status Update:* Planning is underway for Tech fairs that will be held during Spring 2014. The fairs will feature opportunities for business owners, ag producers and communities to learn about how to utilize broadband/technology. Topics will include remote video (security and monitoring), cloud computing, security, mobile technology and innovative technologies. Results of the recently conducted business assessment and input from the regional plans influenced the topic areas. Dates scheduled are:
    - March 11: Atkinson
    - March 12: North Platte
    - March 13: McCook

- March 18: Omaha
- March 25: Norfolk
- March 26: Seward
- March 27: Grand Island
- April 2: Sidney
- April 3: Alliance

In addition, broadband technology events are planned in Omaha and at the tribal colleges. The focus of these workshops will targeted to the regions.

Webinars. Up to four webinars will be held each year to address broadband adoption and utilization. Topics may include how to set up community planning groups to sharing results of the various data collections, processes and best practices.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update: Fourteen (14) webinars have been held since 4th quarter 2011. Participation in webinars have averaged 50 participants and follow-up viewings have ranged from 29-373. Webinars focused on cloud computing (227 views), security (190 views) and tablet integration (216 views) have been viewed the most often. Additional webinars will be identified through the business coaches. Webinars are archived at http://broadband.nebraska.gov/events.

Best Practice Videos. One way to expand broadband adoption across Nebraska is to learn from communities, businesses and other organizations who are the early adopters and "get it." This project initiative will identify at least 20 examples of best practices throughout Nebraska and conduct video interviews with key players. These individuals will be asked to describe the essential elements of their success.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update: Status: 37 videos have now been launched through the broadband efforts. Best practice videos have highlighted the benefits of broadband technology. In total, there have been 2,745 views of the various videos. During Q4 the videos were identified by "subject" area on the business page to provide resources to individuals seeking assistance. Videos are archived at http://broadband.nebraska.gov/videos or visit the Youtube channel has been created to host the videos - Http://Youtube.com/broadbandnebraska.
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Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EAS). This project has the potential to be a model for other states as they develop entrepreneurs .The 2011 cohort concluded during Quarter 4 2011 with the 2011 Impact Summit. Forty-six guides/mentors were selected for the 2012 EAS program which started in 1Q 2012. These guides selected 160 companies and 746 managers to work with through the program, impacting almost 5,000 employees in Nebraska. Participating companies attend the four core workshops led by Gallup in Quarter 1 through 3 of 2012. Companies are also provided one on one support from a Gallup trained guide and participate in self-paced activities administered online throughout program. Results are on broadband.nebraska.gov.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update: Status: The broadband component of this activity is completed. A follow-up report of the businesses was shared during Q3 2013.

Technical Assistance Expertise. The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurism to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption. The surveys, focused

conversations and planning efforts have consistently shown that many businesses in the State of Nebraska do not understand how technology and broadband can be used to enhance their bottom line. Over the past six months, the planning team has explored various ways to show businesses the return on investment (ROI) in using broadband. During Q2, the broadband planning initiative partnered with the Strategic Network Group (SNG) on an approach to connect with businesses, build capacity within the state to work with businesses and to measure change/impact.

> *4th Quarter 2013 Status Update*: The business survey was launched September 3rd by the Lt. Governor. Over 1,100 businesses participated in the survey that received personal invitations through an email. Other businesses also had the opportunity to participate through the website. A scorecard will be available for up to 500 businesses that will highlight how a business compares to other businesses from similar industries. During Q4, coaches were identified to review the scorecard with businesses and help in prioritizing actions. Currently 20+ coaches have been trained and are committed to work with businesses beginning during Q1. Coaches include economic developers, chamber representatives, and service provides that work with businesses. Additional trainings will be conducted. Broadband planning team members have been meeting regularly with SNG to move this project forward. Additional technical assistance has been established that will help businesses that participated in the survey to understand the effectiveness of their technology usage.

Broadband Portal Development - Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska and technical assistance materials.

> *4th Quarter 2013 Status Update* Website officially launched in April 2012. Since that time there have been 16,763 visits and 10,920 unique visitors with an average visit of 3:19. During the last quarter July through September, there were 1,673 visits and 1,315 unique visitors. Marketing efforts continue to draw people to the website. During Q1 increased effort will be used to attract interest in resources to assist businesses and the business survey results. Efforts are underway to identify what information should carry forward on the website after the grant is completed. The technical assistance to businesses will be moved to an effort called the Power of Business.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Regional Planning Teams. Regional planning teams were formed to conduct regional assessments, prioritize opportunities, and develop strategies. Regional coaches assisted planning teams in the development of plans. Each region held a regional forum to engage Nebraskans in the regional planning efforts. Over 300 individuals participated in the eight regional forums. Of these 300 individuals, around 80 initially indicated a willingness to serve on the planning teams. In addition, 105 individuals participated in 17 focus groups to identify priorities.

> *4th Quarter 2013 Status Update*: The regional plans were completed during Q3 2013 and featured at the Nebraska Broadband Conference during Q4 2013. No matter the region a common vision is that all residents and businesses will have access to digital information and communication tools and the training to skillfully use. Long term goals consistent among all regions include the attraction and retention of population – including youth retention; increase in economic development; increase in well-being/quality of life; and decrease in the digital divide – rural and urban.

The successful realization of the regional plans --- their vision and goals and the growing success of the State of Nebraska depend on access to broadband services by all geographic areas. Currently, access varies by area and community.

Reliable access to high-speed Internet service and training is necessary to achieve increased adoption and use, especially in the priority areas. A statewide broadband kickoff was held November 2013. Over 50 people participated in the statewide kick-of. Four work groups were formed around priority areas. Those priorities are:

- Digital Literacy and Adoption/Advanced Technology Training
- Broadband Availability and Affordability
- Economic Development
- Agriculture

The priority areas were those that the regions felt there was the most opportunity to increase the adoption and utilization of broadband. In addition, other priority actions identified are local government, education, health care and non-profits/helping individuals access human services online. May 2014 is being set as the deadline for completing the statewide plan.

Community Planning - North/South Omaha. North and south Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. The AIM Institute and the Omaha metro region have combined efforts to address broadband adoption and utilization in the Omaha metro region.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update: Strategic plan has been completed for the North/South Omaha planning project. The next step is to work with community partners to explore how to best provide effective education and build awareness of how non-profits can increase their influence and effectively deliver services using technology.

Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities. We will form additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data. Coaches with specific knowledge of these regional areas will be added to work specifically with these areas to develop plans relevant to their situation regarding broadband adoption and availability.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update: A session with the tribal colleges is being planned for February or March 2014 to have a better understanding of what devices (i.e., computes, iPads) the tribal members have, what they do not have and what is their highest priority in terms of electronic communication. The goal will be to increase their awareness and use of technology. One component of these sessions will be to have an IT individual available to help answer questions about challenges with phone, data and internet carriers. Now that the radio station has been established there is interest in looking at broadband in more depth.

Focus Groups. Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates to gain understanding into the barriers to broadband adoption and utilization from their perspective. Focus groups will also be held with businesses including farmers and ranchers.

4th Quarter 2013 Status Update: Status: In 2013, 17 Focus Groups were held with 105 individuals participating to better understand the challenges and opportunities in the

various regions of the state. Communities with adequate broadband focused on the opportunities. When broadband was not as reliable, the focus became on the challenges. Additional focus groups/listening sessions may be held to help move the initiative forward.

Community Sector Discussions. Community Sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry**.** The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals.

> *4th Quarter 2013 Status Update*: Community sector discussion will be held as needed in support of the statewide plan.

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SUCCESS STORIES FOR REGIONAL PLANNING

The regional plans are complete and have been shared with regional planning teams for feedback. The plans were highlighted during the 2013 broadband conference. The following provides a highlight of the process. No matter the region a common vision is that all residents and businesses will have access to digital information and communication tools and the training to skillfully use. Long term goals consistent among all regions include the attraction and retention of population – including youth retention; increase in economic development; increase in well-being/quality of life; and decrease in the digital divide – rural and urban

The successful realization of the regional plans --- their vision and goals and the growing success of State of Nebraska depend on access to broadband services by all geographic areas. Currently, access varies by area and community.

Reliable access to high-speed Internet service and training is necessary to achieve increased adoption and use, especially in the priority areas. Those priority areas that were consistent across the all areas include:

- Digital Literacy and Adoption/Advanced Technology Training
- Broadband Availability and Affordability
- Economic Development
- Agriculture

The priority areas were those that the regions felt there was the most opportunity to increase the adoption and utilization of broadband.

A Kick-off is being planned for the statewide planning effort for November 2, 2013. The statewide video satellite system is being utilized to allow for participation throughout the state. Regional coaches will help facilitate conversation at each site. Statewide goals and actions will be identified. In addition, other priority actions identified are local government, education, health care and non-profits/helping individuals access human services online. May 2014 is being set as the deadline for completing the statewide plan.